Chapter III
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CHAPTER III

VEDIC VISION OF LIFE

The concept of yajña is essentially related to a vision of life. This concept is connected with and conditioned by the vision of life of the Vedic seers. But in the main picture of the Vedas we cannot meet with any real philosophy dealt with but we see a philosophical background. This is evident if we take into consideration the whole Vedic literature together into a unity.¹

Of course there is difference of opinion regarding the nature of the substance of the Vedic poetry. Some consider the Vedic poetry as "primeval child like, naive prayers"². Some hold that they are "the allegorical representation of the attributes of the Supreme Diety", many people think that they are sacrificial compositions of a primitive race which attached great importance to ceremonial rites; a few are of the view that they are altogether allegorical, and a few others hold them as somewhat naturalistic³.

Dr. Radhakrishnan takes a comprehensive view and tries to reconcile contrary and contradictory statements thus:

these varying opinions need not be locked upon as antagonistic, for they only point to the heterogeneous nature of the Vedic collection⁴.

If we get some vague ideas or suggestions about the range of vision of Vedic people from the Sanskrit part we are led into heights

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¹ Bloomfield, contributions to the interpretation of the Veda J A O S 15, p.153
² Majumdar (R.C.) ed. History and Culture of the Indian people, Vedic Age, (Bombay: Bharatiya Itihasa Samiti, 1951), Ch. XVIII. p.360
³ Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, ed. Source Book of Indian Philosophy, (London: OUP 1957), p.4
⁴ Ibid
and depths of philosophic thinking in the Upanisads, besides the perplexing complexity of the ritualistic Brahmanas. The lack of homogeneity in each part is a striking phenomenon in Vedic literature. This may account for the fact that these collections represent the thought of several generations of thinkers.  

Here again our approach to the Sāṁhitā is conditioned by the fact that we have "only poetry and not text book on philosophy."  

**General Characteristics**

Hymns of the Rgveda reveal certain view of the life of the Aryans. They did not conceive the ideal of asceticism or self-mortification as yet. Men did not retire into forests and subject themselves to penances in order to meditate on religion. The world was not considered as an evil, a place of misery by the Rgvedic rṣis. There was no eagerness to get rid of the body and to escape from the shackles of this world. To them this world was a good world. They wanted to enjoy life in this world to the full. The Rgvedic rṣis conceived this world as a fit place for virtuous men to lead a good life under the protection of beneficent gods. This world formed the true stepping stone to a higher life in other regions. There was no tinge of pessimism in the Rgvedic view of life. They did not believe that life is a misery which can be ended by eradicating desire or vāsanas. The Rgveda is full of prayers for long life, freedom from disease, heroic progeny, wealth, power, abundance of food and drink, the defeat of rivals, etc.

The religious thought of the Rgveda betrays a practical streak.  

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5 Ibid  
6 C. Kunnan Raja, Some fundamental problems in Indian Philosophy, p. 142  
7 The Vedic Age, p. 382
The worship of the powers of Nature is sincere but utilitarian. There is the mention of the heaven and the still higher abodes but no words about hell. The heaven was to be reached through sacrifices and worship of gods. To the Rgvedic sages the world was a rung in the ladder of the true progression of man's soul along his spiritual path. There was no conflict between man's future and his present, no conflict between economic and ethical views. Man's life was conceived of as a harmonious unit.

In course of time, the views of the Aryans about nature and divinity changed. In the later hymns of the Rgveda we find unmistakable indications of the tendency towards Herotheism and even monism. A hymn in the Rgveda reveals to one that the existent was produced from the non-existent, the manifest arose from the non-manifest. The fact is that the Rgvedic Aryan worshippers appreciated the glorious phenomena of nature and they soon rose from these phenomena to grasp the mysteries of creation and its creator. They soon realized the noble truth that god exists and that he is the creator of all creation in the universe. The hymns of the Rgveda give us a glimpse of the sublime conception of the supreme deity. These hymns foreshadow the idea of universal unity and express the belief that god is one although he bears many names "the gods are one and the same, only the sages describe them differently". Thus the idea of a single supreme power governing and controlling the universe seems finally to have emerged and to have superseded the earlier conception of a number of deities co-ordinating in their work of controlling the great cosmic phenomena.

Principles that uphold the Earth:

The atharva veda says that the earth is upheld by Dharma.
The principles that uphold the earth are given as follows: **Satya**

brhad rtam ugran diksā tare brahma yajña-prthivim dhārayanti. Truth, Eternal Order that is great and stern, consecration, austerity, prayer and ritual these uphold the earth. This can be taken as key sentence that summarizes the Vedic view of life. Here the mention of yajña is noteworthy. Let us examine briefly the nature of each one of these principles.

From a perusal of the hymn of creation it can be easily seen that the keynote of Vedic philosophy is the pursuit of truth (**satya**).

Every verse of it throbs with the everlasting desire of man to penetrate deeper and deeper into the mysteries of life. The highest truth, however, is beyond comprehension in terms of logical or epistemological categories. It is vouchsafed to man in the depths of his inward experience. It is an illumination, a transforming realisation which would thus take us beyond the bounds of speculative reason or philosophy. It is revelation in the sense that truth is experienced in a direct vision, that is given rather than achieved, then it is not merely comprehended by an effort of the intellect or the understanding but intuited immediately in a moment of total receptivity. The Vedas embody such intuitions and are therefore revelatory in a final sense. The highest truth is revealed in an ineffable vision.

Man realises truth, and in the realisation fulfils the supreme

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8 AV 12.1.17
9 RV 10.129
10 We get this word in the Upanisadic prayer, ‘*asato ma sadgamin*’ BU 1.3.28 RV 1.164.6 gives an example of the sage’s modest enquiry. The word satya comes from the root *sā* which means ‘to be’, to exist; Sat is the present participle = being. Satya is Beingness, the quality of existence, the state or condition of reality. It has come to mean truth.
purpose of life. 'Brahmavidapnotinaram' and 'Brahmavid Brahmaiva-bhayati' are well known Upanisadic expressions that reveal the nature of the Supreme Purusaṣṭha, as essentially identical with the ultimate Reality.

Each individual manifestation of energy is an aesthetic configuration, valid in its own terms. Poetic sensitiveness sees both the unitary meaning and the plurality of forms without the slightest mutual contradiction. Thus the perception of the apparent dualism is resolved in the poetic experience of unity.

"ekam sad vivarā bahudhā vadanti" ¹¹

Here there is an interesting and illuminating aspect of Vedic vision that comes to our view. The Vedic mind avoided both dangers of polytheism and Monotheism by finding an aesthetic solution to the problem. Metaphysical thought asserted the unity of godhead, but the poetic imagination won the freedom to conceive it in various forms, in harmony with the plural beauty of the world itself. It is clear beyond any ambiguity that the whole approach is poetic. "The Beautiful Winged, though He is one, the wise poets shape, with songs in many figures".

From these perceptions emerge a richly orchestrated affirmation of the highest Reality or Purusa, as the creator and sustainer of the universe. The visible finite is derived from the invisible infinite. An image of almost surrealistic power is used to express this perception a tree with roots above and branches growing downward. ¹²

¹¹ RV 1.164.46
¹² MU 2.3.1
Every civilization, world view and all, begins as a tradition in a landscape, in a community or a society. India’s first recorded tradition comes from the Indus, from a landscape dominated by some profound natural images the tree, as attested in Ṛgveda’s image as much as on the seals of the Harappa’s civilization, the light, the Usas, the sun, the bull, and the wheel which turns endlessly along countless country paths. Surely, even elements of landscape pertain to questions about the origins of a civilization’s world view. All this wealth of visual beauty served the poets as raw material from which to create their symbolism. It was never used for its own sake. Nature was used always to illustrate the religious thought! Initial speculations about the invisible order of things, at the beginning of a civilizations literacy, find poets and prophets looking to their natural landscape for images to represent that invisible. Speaking of their god, the nomadic shepherds of the Old Testament said, “The Lord is my shepherd”. Speculation seeks to conceptualize reality in order to provide a frame for a meaningful experience of reality. A civilization’s thought is framed by its world views, its frame for understanding the facts of life and the given of human empirical reality. The framers who created the Vedic World views chose their basic images of the invisible, spiritual order of things from the familiar landscapes and activities of everyday life.

Within any tradition, something is archetypal or an archetype when and if it occurs first; whenever it recurs, it is ectypal. The Ṛgveda itself makes archetype ectype distinction when (in 10.130.3)\(^1\)

\[\text{RV 10.130.3} \quad \text{“Kāsit pramāṇa pratīma kim nidānam, yād deva devam ayajanta viśe” what was the measure and the model, what was the basis, when all the gods sacrificed the (first) god?} \]
it distinguishes the prāmsā (archetype) from the pratima, ectype. The archе (beginning, starting point, ultimate underlying form or impression) establishes a traditional form, the model for many subsequent ectypes or realizations of the original, conforming more or less to it. World view means the basic picture assumed by all members of a group or tradition which serves as the frame of meaningful action and of a civilizations various ways of understanding life (its various philosophies or visions of life). World views ground themselves in one or several root metaphors, the image models of fundamental forms of reality as they conceive it. A root metaphor, for instance, of the early Aryan world view involved seeing reality as a living person (the purusa), while science's world view sees nature as a machine made of dead matter.

With such powerful attributes so important to human well-being the sun was bound to be used by poets, artists, and speculators as an image vehicle to represent what they saw or thought. Rgvedic poets, however, divinised the sun as Savitr and Sūrya. They enigmatised rta with solar images. Concern for rta (the "True" or "Ordered" creation) preoccupies these Rgvedic poets at all levels, in rite, sacred speech, and cosmos. As its beginnings the Vedic Rta's world view conceived of world reality as having an inner, unseen order, rta. To know rta meant to be in touch with Truth about this Real. According to their understanding, the sun went across the sky with the moon, fertility of sons and kine depended on the bounty of unseen powers instead of on natural patterns of weather and gynaeology, as we now understand them. The ritual of the Indo-Aryans sought direct interaction with the underlying order of reality, the rta which guaranteed every day expectations and aspirations. In this effort they were in no way distinct from other human groups who attempted through myth,
ritual and symbol to interact for their well-being with the subtle, "spiritual" level of reality.

It can be seen that it interrelates three levels of meanings: ritual, word, and cosmos. The goal of human ritual (vaiṇāyā vaṁśa), and word as sacred speech is to contact and influence divine power and to take the human role in maintaining cosmic Rta. Something is Rta when its claims correspond to fact, subtle or ordinary. In the older Indo-European model, to know means to see the facts claimed as truth, and thus to verify the claim. Agni, too as ritual mediator, protects Truth order (gaṇamā rtasva), and Agni's cosmic counterpart, the sun is in turn the eye of Mitra - Varuna - Sacred speech unites ritual to cosmic reality, making human action effective in securing divine benefit, maintaining continued order, and assuring protection against disease and misfortune.

Now let us examine the word Rta a little more closely and textually.

Rta

Rta comes from the verb "ṛ", to move, to act. Rta and Satya are spoken of by the Rigveda as being born in the beginning of things out of perfect spiritual ardour. As Satya upholds the earth, so does Rta uphold the heavens.

According to Yāska, Ṛta can mean:

a. Water (Udaka)
b. Sacrifice (Yajña)
c. The act of Procreation

14 RV 10.131.26
15 RV 1.1.6
16 RV 10.110.1 ṛ gati-prapāna-yoh (Dhātupātha, 936)
17 RV 10.35.1
18 Yāska, the Rigshartu and the Nirukta, (2.25), Ed. Lakshman Sarup, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1984), P. 36
f. Seminal fluid – Rta sābdena reta ucyate.

e. Truth (Satya) (III. 10)

f. Wealth (II. 10)

Sāyaṇa gives a variety of significance to Rta; he says –

Rta sāāya agneḥ patriṣatamy (i.e., Rta means “gone”). In the same Rta he writes:

"Rta sāāya yonih udakaṃ; annasya kāraṇabhūte jale." It is difficult to see how these meanings fit into the context well.

In the fourth Mandala of Rgveda the word Rta is used three times. Sāyaṇa says: "Rta sābdena indra va adityāḥ va satyam va yajīyo vocyate". It can be Indra or Aditya or Truth or sacrifice. He renders the word Rta as "Rta-dva" and also as "sacrifice" and "water". He does not care for consistency, it seems.

The significance of Rta is seen in the word "Rtu", the inevitable but regular and spontaneous succession of time. It has come to mean "seasons". Rta can therefore, mean the omnipotence of the Divine working out its purpose in the cosmos; it is the dynamic aspect of the Truth. The infinite vastness, brilliance and bounty of Nature strongly impressed the Aryan mind. It also observed that this infinitely vast nature was not an uncontrolled chaos. The sun rose and set punctually; the rivers flowed in their well-defined courses; the stars shone with undisturbed regularity; every activity in the universe was regulated in a perfect but incomprehensible manner. All this must be owing to a certain 'law' or 'order' which worked behind all the world phenomena. This view (which had developed particularly prominently and more or less exclusively among the proto-Aryans) gave

19 RV 1.65.2, Bhāṣya, SB 6.7.3.11 Rta miti Satyam
20 RV 4.23.8
21 RV 4.23.9 Bhāṣya
rise to the conception of rta, cosmic order.

The concept of r̄ta is peculiar to the Veda – for it does not find the same importance and usage after the Vedic age.

R̄ta has many forms, many embodiments\(^{22}\). Sometimes the higher order of R̄ta is hidden by the lower one\(^{23}\). There is a Truth covered by a Truth.

Though the word rta is obsolete in modern times, its negative anrta has been used from ancient times as the negative of Truth\(^{24}\). It means disorder or chaos. It may also mean falsehood. R̄ta is right movement, right action, action in accordance with the Truth.

Explaining the idea of "world", loka, Nirobindo says:

In the idea of the r̄sa, a world is primarily a formation of consciousness and only secondarily a physical formation of things. A world is a 'loka', a way in which conscious beings images itself. And it is the causal truth, represented in the person of Sūrya, Sāvitrī; that is, the creator of all its forms. For it is the causal idea in the Infinite being – the idea, not abstract, but real and dynamic – that originates the law, the energies, the formation of things and the working out of their potentialities in determined forms by determined process. Because the causal idea is a real force of existence, it is called Sātyan the true in being; because it is the determining truth of all activity and formation, it is called R̄ta, the true in movement; because it is broad and infinite in itself, view, in its scope, and in its operation, it is called brhat, the large or vast\(^{25}\).

Rta is an essential aspect of the doctrine of the unity of reality or perhaps rta is a form in which Truth (Satya) appear to the r̄sa.

Aspects of rta – Rta has many aspects viz. cosmic, ethical, social,

\(^{22}\) RV 4.23.7 and 9

\(^{23}\) RV 5.62.2

\(^{24}\) RV 1.105.8

\(^{25}\) Key to Vedic Symbolism
Here we shall consider its cosmic aspect.

**Cosmic Law or Order**

In this aspect **rta** represents the "Cosmic Order", the principle which rules over the world and nature. The regular recurrence of the natural phenomena, rising and setting of the sun, the coming of dawn, are all regulated by **rta**. A god is 'Rtavan' guardian or observer of **rta**; one is said to be born of **rta** (Rtajata).

Varuna is often spoken of as the guardian of **rta**; he is referred to as "the dispenser of the law". The best things in nature are the creations of Varuna:

\[ \text{Vanisu vyantarikram tatana Vaivamaryatsu} \]
\[ \text{nava asavyasus hutsa kratum varuno asvagnum divi suryamadadhat soma-} \]
\[ \text{madram} \]

The air hath varuna placed among the tree tops, Milk in the cows and strength in the swift horses, wisdom in hearts and fire within the waters, In heaven the sun and soma on the mountain.

*Indra is mighty because of **rta**. If there is no **rta** Indra is no Indra at all, say the Vedic poet*. The Dweller in Eternal law,

26 S. Radhakrishnan and Moore, "A Source Book of Indian Philosophy", p. 25 "one of the special forms in which the doctrine of the Unity of reality appeared was in the recognition of a universal and eternal law, **rta**. **Rta** represents the unity of rightness underlying the orderliness of the universe*.

27 Ibid

28 RV 5.85.2

29 RV 8.100.3-4.

Desiring strength, bring forward a hymn of praise, a truthful hymn to Indra, if truly he exists; "There is no Indra" some have said "Who has seen Him? Whom, then, shall we adore?" "I exist; O sing joy upon me here; All that exists I surpass in splendour. The Eternal law's commandments make me mighty; Where I rend, I rend asunder the world".
the Dweller in the infinite sky; born of water, born of light, born of Eternal Law, born of the mountain. He is the Eternal Law.

Śrava is the Deity referred to in these verses (Hamsa signifies the ultimate reality). He is in Eternal Law; He is the Eternal Law, thus goes the thought. A modern psychologist Jung observes and gives in his own way a brief discussion of rta in his book "psychological types." He asks:

What then is rta? and answers himself, "Rta signifies established order, regulation, direction, determination, sacred custom, statute, divine law, right, truth. According to etymological evidence its root-meaning is— ordinance, (right) way, direction, course (to be followed) that which is ordained by rta are in those nature fills the whole world, but the particular manifestations of Rta. Processes which always remain constant, and inevitably— thus the idea of regulated recurrence. By Rta's ordinance the heaven born dawn was lighted."

In obedience to rta the ancient ones who order the world "made the sun to mount the heavens", who himself "is the burning countenance of Rta". Around the heavens circles the year, the twelve poked wheel of Rta which never ages. Agni is called the offspring of Rta. In the doing of man, Rta operates as the moral law, which enjoins truth and the straight way.

Citing a few examples illustrating the meaning of Rta he says:

There is no need, I think, for further examples to show that the concept of Rta like sun and wind etc. is a libido-symbol. Only the Rta concept is less concrete and contains the abstract element of established direction and lawfulness; i.e., the determined and ordered path or process.

According to Aurobindo

the central conception of the Veda is the conquest of the truth out of the darkness of ignorance and by the conquest of the Truth

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31 Ibid, p.261
the conquest also of immortality. For the Vedic Rta is a
spiritual as well as a psychological conception. It is the
true being, the true consciousness, the true delight of exist-
ence by this earth of body, this mid region of vital forces,
this ordinary sky or heaven of mind. We have to cross beyond
all these planes in order to arrive at the higher plane of that
superconscient Truth which is the own home of the gods and the
foundation of immortality.  

The third principle of Dharma is consecration. This is chiefly
directed at the realization of Satya or Ultimate Truth. Diksa is the
Vedic term for it. The Yajurveda mentions the progressive stages in
spiritual realization in the following verse:

By self dedication one obtains consecration
By consecration one obtains grace;
By grace one obtains reverence
And by reverence is truth obtained.

First there should be an earnest determination for achieving
something, not only in the spiritual plane but in any field of human
endeavour; and this is dedication and this self dedication is Vrata.
This Vrata initiates the spiritual aspirant into spiritual life. This
is diksa. It achieves for him spiritual refinement and grace (daksina).
This leads to the possession of truth, according to the Veda.

Consecration is not merely a formal initiation. There is a deep
personal contact between the teacher and the student under instruction.
The three-day ceremony of initiation (Upanayana) is taken metaphorically
to indicate a new spiritual birth. The Acarya initiating the Brahma-
carin makes him a spiritual child within him. Him for three nights he

32 Nirobindo, the secret of the Veda, (Pondicherry: Sri Arobinic
Ashram, 1956), p.233

33 IV.19.30 Vratena. diksa apnoti diksaayapnoti daksinam daksina
\text{sraddham apnoti Sraddhaya Satyam apyate.}
bears (like the mother the child) in his womb. When he is born the shining ones (Devas) come to see him 34.

Here the guru or the teacher is considered as the spiritual mother of the student. The vow of BrahmaCarya facilitates the student’s march towards the goal. The spiritual vigour of the BrahmaCarya vitalises the whole community.

The BrahmaCarya scatters his virile power on the ridge of the earth. And by this live the four quarters 35.

Withdrawing himself from procreation, the BrahmaCarya recreates himself in the spiritual plane. The Vedic thinkers were fully conscious of the power and value of BrahmaCarya. In the Atharva Veda it is said:

Through the tapas of BrahmaCarya the king protects his kingdom.  
Through the tapas of BrahmaCarya the teacher desires his pupil.  
Through BrahmaCarya the maiden gets youthful husband; By the tapas of BrahmaCarya the Devas drove away death from them. And Indra by BrahmaCarya brought heavenly lustre to the devas 36.

Initiation into higher life is the path of transition from darkness to light, from humanity to divinity, from untruth to truth. This the initiate prays:

Agni, Lord of Vrata! I will observe the Vrata; here I approach truth across untruth 37.

An acarya is needed to guide the student in his search for truth. The search should be conducted by the student himself.

Rgveda gives an illustration:

34 IV 11.5.3  Acarya upanayamaro BrahmaCarinam krnte garbham antah  
tan ratrie tiere udare Bibharti tan iStam drastum abhi samvahI  
devaH

35 IV 11.5.12  BrahmaCari sincati sanau retah arthivyam tena  
jivanti pradHascataasraH.

36 IV 11.5.17.19

37 IV 15.15
One ignorant of the land asks of one who knows it; he travels forward, instructed by the knowing one.

This, indeed, is the blessing of instruction. One finds the path that leads straight onward.

Here it is clearly shown that the role of a teacher is that of a guide. The pupil learns by himself. The teacher can show the way; the student must discover things for himself.

Tapas is austerity.

Even in one's worldly life one has to earn one's bread through the sweat of one's brow. This is the case with spiritual life too. The path to higher life is the path of constant and continuous hard striving. Higher life requires powerful intellect. The Vedic student prays for such power to be given to him. This is evident in the jñāyatra mantra. Again, the Veda says "Gods befriend none but him who has toiled."

The sleepless ones (atandráh) punish indolence. Never may sleep or idle talk sway us, prays the student. According to the Indian concept tapas lies at the beginning of all great things.

Paul Deussen says:

As early as the creation myths we saw how the creator of the universe prepared himself for his work by the practice of tapas in which serves to promote the incubation of the egg of the universe blends with the ideas of the exertion, fatigue, self-word the ancient idea of heat which

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38 RV 10.32.7
akṣetravit kṣetrajam hya japā
ta prati kṣetrajamanistah
etadhvi bhadram ahusasanāyo-
tra śrutim vídayanj asinam.

Also RV 9.70.9 Kṣetrajñādi diṣṭa śā vīpochāte. The man who knows the land tells the direction to the man who asks.

39 RV 4.13.11 Na rте śrāntasya sakhyaṁ devaḥ.

40 RV 8.2.18

41 RV 9.48.14

42 RV 10.129
remuniciation, by means of which the creator is transmuted (entirely, or in part) into the universe which he proposes to create. According to this conception everything that is great in the universe is dependent on tapas.43

From Śrama (toil) and tapas the first-born Skambha arose and permeated the universe,44 in tapas he has rocked on the surface of the Primeval water.45 As mentioned earlier (under consecration) the king protects the rastra (state) through tapas etc.

Truth and order, Satya and Rta, it is said, were born at the beginning out of blazing spiritual fire (tapas).46 From blazing Ardour cosmic order came and Truth; from thence was born the obscure night from thence the ocean with its bellowing waves. From Ocean with its waves was born the year which marshals the succession of nights and days, controlling everything that blinks the eye. Then, as before, did the greater fashion the Sun and Moon, the Heaven and the Earth, the atmosphere and the domain of light.

Cosmic ardour gives birth to that undifferentiated reality or the cosmic night that envelops everything. From this "yoni" or matrix space and time came to be, that is, the ocean and the year; after that life appeared, all that "blinks the eye" etc. The performance of 'tapas' is considered as the reenactment of this premordial and cosmic act by which the universe came to be.

44 AV 10.7.36
45 Ibid. 10.7.38
46 RV 10.190.1. Rtam ca satyam cābhiddhat tapaso // dhyajayaṭa.
Agyeda says that the seven Reis together be taken
themselves to the practice of tapas. In another passage
it is said that the souls on their entrance into heaven are
apostrophised.

Which invincible by tapas,
Have won their way by tapas to the light,
That have accomplished the severest tapas —
To these now enter in.

In Taittirīya Upanisad a higher value is placed upon
asceticism, Bhṛgu is repeatedly urged by his father Varuna
to know Brahman by tapas. "By tapas seek to know Brahman,
for tapas is Brahman." By progressive tapas Bhṛgu rises
step by step to the recognition of ānena, prāṇa, manas,
knowledge, and finally ānanda as Brahman, and with this last
the highest degree attainable by tapas is reached. Again
according to Svetāṣṭaravatara the knowledge of Brahman is based
upon ātmanvidyā and tapas. Mait Upanisad goes to the
extent of saying that "without being an ascetic it is impos-
sible either to attain the knowledge of the ātman, or to
bring work to fruition.

47 RV 10.109.4. Also RV 10.154-2.
48 TV 3.2
49 SU 1.15, 16; 6.21
50 Mait U.4.3.
Tapas and dikṣā often appear together in the Sruti.  

Dikṣā is even said to be the womb of tapas. In the womb of consecration (in the act of offering and sanctifying) takes place the transformation of reality; this transformation is the function of tapas. By tapas "things" become, are incorporated into man's world. The attitude of Vedic man toward the universe is fundamentally an attitude of communion and consecration. Consecration transforms a thing into "person", it personifies. It is by "tapas" and dikṣā that man enters into relationship with, or rather constructs, his world. The religious ceremonies allow man to assimilate them in such a way as to build a higher unity which integrates "individual" and "thing" into a living person.

There are Vedic passages that condemn a gloomy asceticism that lacks the characteristic mark of knowledge. Brahadāranyaka Upanisad more definitely opens up the prospect of the way of the gods to those alone "who observe faith and truth in the forest", but on the other hand offers only the way of the fathers in return for sacrifice, alms giving, and asceticism.

Yājñavalkya declares:

Of a truth, O Gargī, he who does not know this imperishable one, and in this world sacrifices and distributes alms and does penance (tapas taprast) for many thousands of years, wins thereby only finite (reward).

51 AV 12.1.1
52 Mun. U 3.2.4
53 BU 6.2.15
54 BU 3.8.10
Asceetism is condemned as a profession; but commented and recommended as a productive and purifying force of spiritual attainments.\textsuperscript{55}

V. Brahman

Brahman means prayer.\textsuperscript{56} To Deussen the word Brahman means, in the whole of the Rgveda, nothing more than the 'lifting and spiritualizing power of prayer'.\textsuperscript{57} Max Muller does not rule out the possibility of its having the meaning of 'creative force or propelling power'. But he suggests that the neuter word, taken to mean hymn or prayer should have had originally the more general meaning of 'speech or word'.\textsuperscript{58}

The etymology of the word 'Brahman' is doubtful for Winternitz. He quotes from St. Petersburg Sanskrit Dictionary and says: we find Brahman explained as "the devotion which appears as the craving and fullness of the soul".

\textsuperscript{55} "It is a tribute to the high metaphysical capacity of the Indian people, that the phenomenon of asceticism made its appearance among them earlier and occupied a larger place than any other known people (We leave out of consideration at this point the later misuse of asceticism in the interest of merely selfish aims to excite wonder or to secure profit". Paul Deussen, "The Philosophy of the Upanisads", p.65.

\textsuperscript{56} M. Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1933), p.248

\textsuperscript{57} Paul Deussen, System of the Vedanta, tr: by Charles Johnston (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1912), p.49.

\textsuperscript{58} F.H. Max Miller, The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy (London: Longmans, 1892), p. 53.
He continues: But in the Veda, itself, "Brahman" occurs countless times in the meaning of "Prayer" or "magic" formula; there is nowhere any thought of devotion or exaltation to the divine, but it always means mere formula and verses containing secret magic power, by which man desires to influence divine beings or to obtain, or even to force something from them. When a later period united these magic formula and prayers in "books" or school texts as the three Vedas these were called trāyī vidyā or "three fold knowledge", also briefly "the Brahman". Quoting M. Haug he refers to an older etymology from the root brh 'to grow'; it also means to 'burst forth'. Gradually it came to signify the ground of the universe or the source of all existence, that which has burst forth into the universe, or that from which the universe has grown.

According to Yāska 'Brahman' has two meanings 'annam' (food) and 'dhanam' (wealth). Both in the sense of "prayer" and object of prayer it can be used. In the sense of "book of

59 M. Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature, p.246.

60 B 3.4.

A modern scholar, C.G. Jung gives a summary of the meanings of the word Brahman as he understood it. "The word Brahman means: 1. prayer; 2. incantation, 3. Sacred speech; 4. Sacred knowledge (Veda); 5. holy life; 6. the absolute; 7. the sacred caste (the Brahmanas) "quoting Deussen he concludes; Brahman is derived from brh, saccire 'swelling', i.e. 'prayer' conceived of as "the upward - urging will of man striving towards the holy, the divine". Psychological Types p.249

Still its meaning is not beyond dispute.
prayer" also it is relevant and then it may designate the or "the book of knowledge". And as book of knowledge the im-
tance and sacredness of the Vedas have been held in high esteem throughout the ages, and thus it has been the vitalising and unifying force of man and society for generations of Indians. Brahman is the culmination and the goal of the entire Vedic world, of its prayers, hymns, sacrifices, and of the aspirations contained in them. In the words of Taittiriya Upanisad, "that from which beings are born, that by which, when born, they live, that into which, when dying, they enter, that you should desire to know; that is Brahman". This Brahman, source and end of everything, is not a separated "being", it is not merely at the begin-
ning and end of the ontological pilgrimage; Brahman is conscious-
ness. All beings are nothing but the reflections, the shadows, the thoughts, the objects, the creatures, of that pure conscious-
ness. He is the ultimate oneness of reality. The search for truth finds its fulfillment in Brahman, and hence truth is identi-

cified with Brahman and Brahman with truth.

VI. Yajña

Since a detailed discussion of the various meanings and significances of this word is given in the first chapter only some general remarks need be attempted here.

Yajña is that which preserves the universe in existence. As indicated earlier at the origin of every being there is a sacrifice. The texture of the universe is sacrifice, it is the act par excellence which produces all that is. The process of weaving and unwraving the world is technically termed an Yajña by the Rigveda.
1. Sacrifice (resembles) a loom with threads extended this way and that, composed of innumerable rituals. Behold now the Fathers weaving the fabric, seated on the out stretcher loom, "Lengthwise cross wise" they cry.

2. Behold now a man who unwinds and sets the thread, a man who unwinds 'it right up to the vault of heaven. Here are the pegs, they are fastened to the place of worship. The saman - hymns are used for weaving shuttles.

3. What was the model, the pattern, what the connections? What was the ritual butter and the line of demarcations? What was the meter, the hymn, the preliminary chant, When all the deities sacrificed God in oblation?

It was this same ritual the seers, our Fathers, adopted. When in the beginning sacrifice was first created with the eyes of my mind I believe I can envisage those who were first to offer this sacrifice.  

In this hymn a connection between weaving and sacrifice is expressed. This world-building action or sacrifice is not left to cosmic forces alone; Men and the ancestors, or "fathers" are also involved in the task of weaving the fabric and spinning the threads. The rituals are the threads, the hymns the shuttles the weavers the ancestral sacrifices. The meaning of this hymn becomes clearer if we remember a similar passage in Atharva Veda. It speaks of two maidens, symbolizing day and night, dancing in circles and endlessly weaving the stuff of the world, spreading...
all the colours of reality. Over the six regions of the universe.\textsuperscript{62} Undoubtedly, it is clear from these hymns that sacrifice is seen as the creative act of weaving that cosmic fabric in which everything has its place and receives its meaning. The \textit{Atharva Veda} gives a hint as to the origin of sacrifice or \textit{Brahmayaj\=na}:

1. Through sacrifice the gods sacrificed to the sacrifice
   These were the first established rites
   Their greatness enhanced, they ascended to heaven
   Where dwell the ancient gods who must needs be appeared.
2. Thus originated sacrifice, it manifested itself
   It came to birth and then increased
   It became the Lord and Ruler of the Gods
   May sacrifice bestow upon us some treasure.\textsuperscript{63}

\textit{Satapatha Br\=ahmana} sums up the importance of sacrifice in one sentence: "All that is including all the gods, has but one principle of life; sacrifice."\textsuperscript{64}

\textbf{Eschatology}

There are some intimations of immortality in the Veda. Another characteristic feature of the Vedic vision of life is the belief in immortality. A few of such intimations are found in the eschatological hymns of the \textit{Ṛgveda Samhita}. According to the Vedic view, the spirit of the deceased proceeded to the realm of eternal light on the path trodden by the fathers, whom

\textsuperscript{62} AV 10.7. 42-43 and also RV 1.113.3
\textsuperscript{63} AV 7. 5
\textsuperscript{64} SB 14.3.2.1
he finds in the highest heaven revelling with Yama, King of
the dead, and feasting with the gods. 65

In one of the funeral hymns the dead man is thus addressed:

Go forth, go forth along those ancient pathways
To where our early ancestors departed
There thou shalt see rejoicing in libations
The two kings, Varuna the god and Yama.
Heaven is gained as a reward by heroes who risk
their lives in battle but above all by those who bestow liberal
sacrificial gifts on priests. 66

Belief in personal immortality may be an outcome
of a primary instinct common to mankind. There are passages
in the Rigveda where a clear reference is made to the souls
of deceased ancestors (pitarâh) who are conceived of as still
existing in some other world.

Two paths are mentioned, one of the fathers and the
other of the gods. 67 Pitryâna and Devyâna. It can be
easily inferred that the Vedic poets believed in the survival
of the immortal principle of man even after the destruction of

65 A.A. Macdonell, A History of Sanskrit Literature, p.97
67 RV 10.88.15
Also Ref: "Source Book in Indian Philosophy", p.31
"The Vedic Indians believed in personal immortality
and in the world of the gods and the world of the Fathers
(manes), good men went to heaven or the world of Visnu,
and others to the world presided over by Yama, although
Yama was also thought of as the ruler of all departed
spirits."
his mortal frame. When the dead body is either consigned to
flames 68 or laid to gentle rest in the bosom of Mother Earth 69
the earth-born portion is given back, but the soul of the pious
man which belongs to the world above, soars up towards a new
life. 70 It is interesting to compare this idea with that of
Wordsworth.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting
The soul that rises with us, our life's star
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar. 71

A metrical picture of the Vedic idea of the future life is given
by Muir:

Thine eye shall seek the solar orb,
 Thy life breath to the wind shall fly,
 Thy part ethereal to the sky;
Thine earthly part shall earth absorb.

Thine unborn part shall Agni bright
With his benignant rays illumine,
And guide it through the trackless gloom
To yonder sphere of life and light. 72

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68 RV 10.16.1
69 RV 10.16.10-13
70 RV 10.16.3, 4
71 Ode on Intimations of Immortality.
The enjoyments in the abode of Yama are said to be granted by Some and are described in Rigveda. Muir's translation is given below:

Where glory never-fading is - where is the world of heavenly light,
The world of immortality - the everlasting - set me there
Where Yama reigns, vivasvat's son - where is the inmost sphere of heaven,
Where those abounding waters flow - O make me but immortal there!
Where there is freedom unrestrained - there in the triple vault of heaven,
Where worlds of brightest glory are - O make me but immortal there!
Where pleasures and enjoyments are - where repulses and abiding bliss,
Where all desires are satisfied - O make me but immortal there!
Where joys and delights are, where pleasures and gratifications,
Where objects of desire are attained - O make me but immortal there! 73
These lines give a clear picture of the hopes and aspirations too of the Vedic people, beside the fact of their longing for immortality.

Here the optimism of the Vedic Indian is evident, because as is to be inferred from the above prayer death held out to him a prospect of greater happiness. He had all the
pleasures of life in a greater measure, so much so that it is possible to call the Vedic Heaven "a glorified world of material joys". 74

Deveyōna and Pitrāyōna: The Doctrine of two ways and Five fires:

The idea of Deveyōna and Pitrāyōna is a corollary of the doctrine of transmigration. The chief text of the doctrine is found in Chāndogypanisad. 75 A brief form is given in Brhadāraṇyakopanisad. 76 Since the idea is presented in the frame of yajña and the ritual idiom it is worth quoting in full.

'Yonder world, verily, O ātama, is a sacrificial fire. In this case the sun is the fuel; the light rays, the smoke; the day, the flame; the moon, the coals; the stars, the sparks. (2) In this fire the gods offer faith (śraddhā). From this oblation arises King Śoma. 77

The rain-cloud, verily, O ātama, is a sacrificial fire. In this case wind is the fuel; mist, the smoke; lighten- ing, the flame; the thunderbolt, the coals; hail stones, the sparks. (2) In this fire the gods offer King Śoma. From this oblation arises rain. 78

74 A.A. Macdonell, Vedic Mythology, (Strasbourg: K.J. Trubner, 1897), p. 162
75 CU 5. 4-10
76 BU 6.2. 9-15
77 CU 5.4. 1, 2
78 CU 5.5.1, 2
The earth, verily, O Gautama, is a sacrificial fire. In this case the year is the fuel; space the smoke; night, the flame; the quarters of heaven, the coals; the intermediate quarters, the sparks. (2) In this fire the gods offer rain. From this oblation arises food. 79

Man, verily, O Gautama, is a sacrificial fire. In this case speech is the fuel; breath the smoke; the tongue, the flame; the eyes, the coals; the ear, the sparks. (2) In this fire the gods offer food. From this oblation arises semen. 80

Woman, verily, O Gautama, is a sacrificial fire. In this case the sexual organ is the fuel; when one invites, the smoke, the Vulva, the flame; when one inserts, the coals; the sexual pleasures, the sparks. (2) In this fire the gods offer semen. From this oblation arises the fetus. 81 Thus indeed in the fifth oblation water comes to have a human voice. After he has lain within for ten months, or for however long it is, as a fetus covered with membrane, then he is born. (2) when born, he lives for as long as his length of life. When deceased, they carry him hence to the appointed place for the fire from whence indeed he came, from whence he arose. 82
So those who know this, and those too who worship in a forest with the thought that "Faith is austerity", pass into the flame; from the flame, into the day; from the day, into the half month of the waning moon; from the half-month of the waning moon, into the six months during the sun moves northward; (2) from those months, into the year; from the year, into the sun; from the sun, into the moon; from the moon, into the lightning. There there is a person (purusa) who is non-human (a-mānava). He leads them on to Brahma. This is the way leading to the gods. 83

But those who in the village reverence a belief in sacrifice, merit and alma giving they pass into the smoke; from the smoke into the night; from the night into the latter half of the month; from the latter half of the month, into the six months during which the sun moves southward - these do not reach the year; (4) from those months, into the world of the fathers; from the world of the fathers, into space; from space, into the moon. That is King Soma. That is the food of the gods. The gods eat that. (5) After having remained in it as long as there is a residue (of this good works), then by that course by which they came they return again, just as they came, into space; from space, into wind. After having become wind, one becomes smoke. After having become smoke, he becomes mist. (6) After having become mist, he becomes cloud; after having become cloud, he rains down. They are born here as rice and barley, as herbs and trees, as sesame plants and beans. Thence, verily, indeed, it is difficult to emerge;
for only if some one or other eats him as food and emits him as semen, does he develop further. (7) Accordingly, those who are of pleasant conduct here - the prospect is, indeed, that they will enter a pleasant womb, either the womb of a Brähmana, or the womb of a Ksatriya or the womb of a Vaisya.

But those who are of stinking conduct here - the prospect is, indeed, that they will enter a stinking womb, either the womb of a dog, or the womb of a swine, or the womb of a putrō caste (candālas). (8) But on neither of these ways are the small, continually returning creatures (those of whom it is said) "Be born, and die" there is a third State.

Thereby (it comes about that) yonder world is not filled up. Therefore one should seek to guard himself. As to this there is the following verse:-

(9) The plunderer of gold, the liquor-drinker, the invader of a teacher's bed, the Brähmana Killer - these four sink downward in the scale, and fifth, he who consorts with them.

(10) But he who knows these five fires thus, is not stained with evil, even though consorting with those people, He becomes pure, clean, possessor of a pure world, who knows this - yea, he who knows this.84

Deussen divides this into two parts. The first part he calls the doctrine of 'five fires' the second part the doctrine of two ways.85 The five fires are the five transitory

84 GU 5.10. 5-6
85 Paul Deussen, Philosophy of the Upanisads, p.33.
stations of the soul in its journey from existence to existence. They are, heaven, atmosphere, earth, father and mother. This is applicable in the case of those who go out through the southern path (daksināyana mārg), while those who traverse through the northern path (Uttarāyana mārg) of the suṣṇa reach Brahman, and never return. Later we find a beatiful account of the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul in Brhadāraṇyaka Upanisad. Quoting the passage, Winternitz says that in connection with it, clearly and distinctly for the first time, the ethical doctrine of Karman (action) which, with the unerringness of a law of Nature must have its consequences. This great doctrine of action he continues, "which was later, especially in Buddhism preached in every street and by-way is still a great mystery in the Upanisads".86

The notion of transmigration finds no place in the Rgvedic world view, which considers immortality (amṛta, the condition of not being dead) to be a long, fruitful life on earth. (amṛtātva,87 does not imply immortality but cannot being dead within the proper space of one hundred autumns of life) terminated sacrificially in the crematory fire leading to the paradise of Yama or the Fathers. The conceptual structure of the transcendent sun and the transmigrant moon provided contrasting destinies for speculative imagination to contemplate as a potential form of creation. It remained for Brāhmaṇa

86 BU 4.3.4. Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature, p.258.
87 RV 5.63.2
period speculators and early Upanisadic sages to apply these images to human nature. They considered human nature to be tied by karmic (consequences of action) to existential transmigration, according to its lunar nature, and at the same time to be essentially free and transcendent, according to its solar nature. The Upanisads conceived of salvation from transmigration in the image of the sun.

The two Upanisadic passages (that deal with devayāna and pitryāna, state the doctrine of recurrent death in imagery that is admittedly archaic and still speculative .... They distinguish after death alternative courses, one that does not lead to return into transmigration and another that leads to repeated "rising up" into phenomenal rebirth realms (lokas).

The former follows a solar path, after separating from social and familial ties to meditate in the forest. It leads through the crematory fire to the solar side of the phenomena (day, the waxing moon, the sun's northward course) through the realm of the gods to the sun and its mystical lightning fire which recalls the four-pointedness of RV 1.152.2. This leads to acceptance into the sacred realms, from whence no return to transmigration can occur. Such an end constitutes salvation, the ultimate goal of action within the new world view's assumption of death as eternal recurrence.

The other half of human nature pursues the alternate lunar destiny. Indeed, those who practice the temporal, orthodox religion (village as opposed to forest) involving sacrifice, donation, and austerity, achieve rebirths in phenomenal worlds
but suffer at each death repeated transmigration. Like the moon, they rise up again and again into the same set of phenomenal rebirth realms. These realms figure on Buddhist representations of the wheel of life, including hells, the realm of hungry ghosts, animals or humans and titans or gods. This fate takes them on a lunar path, following the dark side of phenomena through the crematory fire's smoke to night, to the waning moon, to the Sun's southward course, to the realm of the fathers (the old destiny of the dead in the Rigvedic view), and finally to the moon. From thence they return as food to the realm of creation to experience rebirth.

It may be postulated that death and rebirth, in the later world view, are initially conceived of in terms of images provided by the sun and moon. The sun represents to speculative consciousness an unchanging orb giving life and light. Its celestial partner, the moon, waxes, wanes, then disappears from view for three nights, after which it is born as a sliver of light on the opposite horizon, no longer rising late at night but setting at evening's dusk. The sun never waxes and never wanes, though, like the moon, it rises and sets. A symbolic contrast presents itself in that they both "die" at the end of their respective spheres of day and night, but the sun's dying is not a true death, but rather is merely an apparent one. Though ordering change and passing through changes, the sun is eternal, unchanging, immutable. It returns from each winter's southward retreat, and throughout the year it unceasingly rises after its night-time passage, regardless of the season. The moon, by contrast, suffers recurrent transformation, increasing only to decrease, disappearing only to be reborn again and again.
The nature of departure and disintegration has been further pursued and elaborated in the Upanisad. Ārthabhaṅga asks Yājñavalkya:

Yājñavalkya, said he, "when after the death of this man here his voice enters into the fire, his breath into the wind, his sight into the sun, his organ of thought into the moon, his hearing into the quarters of heaven, his body into the earth, his soul (Ātman) into ākāśa, the hairs of his body into the herbae, the hairs of his head into the trees, and his blood and seed are laid down in the water where there is this man? Take me by the hand, my dear one! said Yājñavalkya. Ārthabhaṅga, let us two only know this; let this discussion of ours not be in public! and the two went out and discussed together; and it was action they praised. Verily, he becomes good through good action, bad through bad action."

This doctrine is then treated in a more detailed manner along with the magnificent description of the departure of the soul out of the body. It says there:

The point of his heart begins to shine, and by this light the Ātman departs, be it out of the eye, or out of the head, or out of other parts of the body. And while he is departing the breath of life (prāna) follows him; and behind the departing breath of life depart all the vital organs, the consciousness also follows them. But, he the cognitive one (the Ātman) is endowed with cognition. Knowledge and the actions, the experiences of the former life, remain attached to him. Just as a grass-leech, when it has arrived at the end of a blade of grass, making another start (for another blade), draws itself together towards (this blade), so man, when he was stripped off the body and has rid himself of non-knowledge, making another start (for another body), draws himself together towards (that other body). Just as an embroiderer undoes a small portion of a piece of embroidery, and out of it creates a different, quite new and more beautiful design, so man, when he has stripped of his body, and has rid himself of non-knowledge creates for himself a different, quite new and more beautiful form, that of the spirit of an ancestor or of a Gandharva, of a Brāhmaṇa or of a Pāṇāpati, of a God or of a man, or that of some other
being . . . As he has acted, as he has lived, so he becomes; he who has done good, is born again as a good one, he who has done evil, is born again as an evil one. He becomes good through good action, bad through bad action. Therefore it is said: 'Man here is formed entirely out of desire and according to his desire is his resolve, and according to his resolve he performs the action, and according to the performance of the action is his destiny.'

In consequence of this doctrine of karman the moral element plays a far greater part in the Upanisads than in the Brāhmans. The story of Naciketas is another context where Yama imparts to Naciketas the doctrine of the immortality of the Ātman.

It may be pointed out as a hypothesis that the two paths discovered by this Ṛṣis have their counterpart in the modern existentialist views of life. For example, there are two kinds of lives lived by people. Most people live others' lives. Their reactions are imitative and responses formal. That is, they follow the path of their ancestors. But there are a few enlightened people who live their own lives. They feel the agony or dread of existence, and by proper choices and correct decisions they try to climb the ladder of existence into higher and higher levels of consciousness where they can find out or realise the "essence" through "existence". For theistic existentialists, like Kierkegaard the essence is God, and therefore when they realise God through 'existence' they achieve freedom, final salvation. For the atheistic existentialist there is no God. He is his own maker. By proper choice and

89 Ibid., 4.4. 2-5
90 Kath U. 1.20; 23.25; 26.27, 29
wise decision he must enlarge and develop his awareness of him-
self and the points of contact of the finite moments and the
infinite possibilities of his existence he is to tread his path
towards the realisation of his essence. He must transcend his
existence in the plane of emotions by stopping his imitative
patterns of behaviour and living his own life.

This is only a hypothesis which requires detailed study
and analysis of the writings of the existentialists to bring it
anywhere near a judgement worth considering; and for which no
attempt is made in this thesis.

**Vedic Materialism**

Referring to this aspect of Vedic life Aurobindo says:

> Nowhere in the Veda is there the gospel of Sannyasa. Everywhere we come across prayers for prosperity, fire and force, _tejas_ and _cīnas_, even material things. Nowhere one sees the scene of poverty; nobody living the life of a destitute, passing his days at the foot of a tree, clad in rags with total renunciation of material things. Escape from the world and its concerns and passing one’s days in inert contemplation of the _āll-high-these things are far from the Vedic way of life. In the Vedic age Kings like Janska ruled kingdoms. Reis like Vasistha stood behind kings to give them counsel. The Reis never be took themselves to the forest, renouncing the world. These things belonged to the dark period of India. 91

The Vedic sage prayed for prosperity and not for austerity. He expressed himself through poetry, music and oratory; in rituals colour, sound, fragrance and all the other finer things of the sens-es have their full play. The glorious lustre of the blazing fire, the sweet perfume of the burnt ghee, the blades of grass, the cooked offering, the crushed _soma_ and all the other material of _yajña_ had their direct and purifying effect on the minds of the worshippers.

Rgveda says: "Food is soul, the apparel is the body, and the unguent is the giver of spiritual vigour". The Veda nowhere tells us to starve the body to feed the soul. The Veda has said that "the wise see with the spirit and the mind".

"Give sight to our eyes,
Give sight to our bodies that they may see
May we survey and discern this world.
May we look on Thee, Sūrya, the most lovely to behold, see well with the eyes of men.

Their earnest and constant prayer is to live for a hundred years.

"May we, for a hundred autumns, see that lustrous Eye (of the sky i.e., the sun), God-ordained, arise:
May we live for a hundred autumns".

The Vedic sage aspires for a long, radiant life.

This ideal is a perfect body and a perfect mind. A striving after perpetual youth is there. Heaven, according to the Vedic conception, is a place of light and joy. He prays for perfection; he prays to soma "O cleansing drink, make us perfect"

O cleansing sacred drink, conqueror of high renown.
Make us perfect
Bring us to light, the light celestial, and all pure joys,
Make us perfect
Enhance our skills and powers of mind drive far all fees,
Make us perfect

92 RV 8.3.24. Ātma pitūs tanur Vāsaçjodā adhyàjananam.
93 RV 10.177.1 Hṛdā pasyanti manasā Vipaścitah.
94 RV 10.158.4-5
95 RV 7.66.16
96 RV 7.54.2
97 RV 9.11 3
O purifier, prepare this drink, a draught for the lord,
Make us perfect
give us a share in the sun by your wisdom and favour
Make us perfect
Sustained and helped by you, long may we see the sun,
Make us perfect. 98

The Vedic poet reminds us of the beauty and glory of the earth and
the wonder of life.

"May the earth - the earth where on men sing and dance
with various noise,
Whereon men meet in battle, and the war cry rises and
the drum resounds,
May she subdue my foemen and make me free from foes." 99

The Vedic poet is proud of being the son of the earth;
Impart to us those vitalizing forces that come,
O earth, from deep within your body, your central point,
your navel; purify us wholly. The earth is mother:
I am son of earth. The rain giver is my father; may he
shower on us blessings! 100

He has high respect for this mighty earth. Earth is composed of rock, of stone, of dust;
Earth is compactly held, consolidated. I venerate this mighty
Earth, the golden-breasted! 101

98  RV 9.4
99  AV 12.1.41.
Yasyam gayanti nṛtyanti bhūmyāṁ mārtyaṁ vyāśtablāḥ
Yuddhyante yasyāṁ akṛndo yasyāṁ vadati dundubhiḥ
Sa no bhūmiḥ pra mudatam sapatnām asapatnām
ma prthivi kṛnotu.
100  AV 12.12
101  AV 12.26
Unity in Variety

The poet prays for wealth on earth "that bears people speaking varied languages with various religions according to the places of abode.

"May the earth that bears people speaking varied language, With various religious rites according to the places of abode, Enrich me with wealth in a thousand streams Like a milch-cow that never fails."

This view lies at the bottom of the catholic out-look of the Vedic religion. They aimed at unity not uniformity. This also gives strength to the Vedic Religion. For the Vedic man the earth is an object of worship and not of exploitation, an object of awe and reverence.

The earth is the basis of life and, when considered as a divine being, she always occupies a special place among the gods. Man is of the earth and earthly; but man is more than earth; though he stands on earth he stands also above her. The earth is the mother of man. But he aspires the position of his father, the Heaven. For example, Rgveda says: 'who gives us back to Aditi, the great Boundless? I wish to see my father and my mother.'

Addressing a diseased man the Atharva Veda says.

"Die not before decrepit old age." Because "This world is the most beloved of all" (ayam lokah priyatamah). He wants to live for a hundred years; and even more.

102 AV 12.1.45. Janam bibhrati bahudha vivacassam nanā dharmaṇam prthivi yathaukasm sahaśaram dhare dravinasaya me duhām dhruveva dhenur anapashuranti

103 RV 1.24
104 AV 5.30.17
105 AV 19.67
May my voice remain strong, my breath unfaltering, 
my sight and my hearing acute!
May my hair not turn gray nor my teeth become blackened, 
may my arms not grow feeble and slack!
May my thighs remain sturdy, my legs swift to go my feet 
neither stumble nor flag!
May my limbs remain whole, each performing its function, 
may my soul remain ever unconquered!  

Desire for a good life has always and everywhere been a human 
arpiration. There are passages in the Veda that articulate well 
in different ways the intense desire of man for happiness, long 
life, wealth, prosperity, offspring and good health. The Vedic 
Indian does not wait for a world to come. He wants to be happy 
and healthy here and now: (iḥa and adva, Ḣāṇīm) 
Make us today enjoyers of wide room and happiness. 107
May we be masters of felicity now (iḥa Ḣāṇīm). 108

He knows that the order of the world, and man's role within 
it tend toward happiness and satisfaction as the normal accompani-
ments of the functioning of the universe. The human condition is 
ot one of bondage or entanglement or of patient waiting for another 
really worth-while form of existence. There is certainly, another 
life; there is a fuller form of existence, but this temporal life 
is not a shadow, it is not devoid of authenticity. Moreover, hap-
piness is the motive of human activity.

Chāndogya Upanisad reveals to us a deep insight into the nature 
of happiness. "When one obtains happiness then one proceeds to
act. No one acts without first obtaining happiness. Only by obtaining happiness does one act." 109

The Vedic Indian is not afraid of death. He knows it as a fact of life. He faces it bravely and serenely. The dying sage prays:

May my breath reach the everlasting air!  
Then let my body end in ashes.  
O Mind! remember, remember my sphere;  
remember my deeds. 110

For the Veda man is not a mean and sinful creature. Agyeda says:

O Bounteous ones, we have established now our perpetual brotherhood,  
With harmony, in the mother's womb. 111

This verse is addressed to Viśvedevas (all gods). Man establishes his friendship with the divine in the mother's womb. Here we can see the seed of spiritual idealism.

To the Vedic Materialist God is not in His Heaven; but he is in the universe. The poet heard the inner voice saying: Paśya meha - see Me here.

The materialistic thinking of the poet finds expression in his prayer for a home; Gāve us a home, give us a friend."112 A happy human life is hardly understandable without a home. A man without a home has only a 'dress' but no 'address'. A man without a house is like a man without a name, in fact the name of a person is very often the name of his house. The house is to a man what roots are to a tree.

109 GU 7.22  
110 YV 40.15  
111 RV 8.63,8  
112 RV 2.11.4
The comfort and convenience of a home makes it sweet for the poet, the house, which is a mere shelter, becomes a home, a civilizing influence, through the gracious thoughts which these poets inspire in us.

Three Images of Life

Life is thought of as a Yajña, a journey and a battle in the Veda. Yajña is primarily an act of worship and giving. It is said in the Rgveda that Yama or Brhaspati died - sacrificed his dear body - to find a path for mortals from this world to another. He chose death, for the sake of Gods, and for man's sake, he chose not immortality.

They made a sacrifice of Brhaspati, the sage, Yama gave up his own dear body. 113

The highest sacrifice is self-sacrifice for a noble cause. In Purusa Sukta it is said that He created the universe by making a sacrifice of Himself. 114 Every moment of our existence, every movement of our life is a sacrifice, giving something to create or bring about something. And sacrifice itself is described as a journey and a battle in the Veda.

' The rocky stream flows on; hold together stand erect, and cross over, my friends!

113 RV 10.12.8
114 RV 10.90.6
Here let us leave those who are evil minded; and
Let us Cross over to powers that are beneficent.  115

Indra is the leader in our battle.

Be heroic, brothers! emulating Him (Indra)
the breaker of hurdles, finder of light,
thunder-armed, who triumphs in battle
crushing the fee with his might.

Be united and follow Indra, my friends.  116

There comes an exhortation for a march to victory:
'Go forward and conquer, you heroes!
May God give you protection
Valiant be your arms, so that you may remain
unconquered.

Here is an element of the heroic outlook.  117 See the
last blessings to the dead:

Proceed, proceed along the ancient path ways
whereon our Forefathers have passed before us
There you shall see God Varuna and Yama
the two Kings, rejoicing in the offerings.
Meet Yama and the Fathers in the highest heaven
along with your offerings and praiseworthy deeds
Rid of imperfection, seek again your dwelling
and assume a body, bright with glory.  118

115  RV  10.53.8.  Here the stream implies life; rocky stream is our life filled with difficulties. Like the flow of the stream our life also is a journey.

116  RV  10.103.6

117  RV  10.103.13

118  RV  10.7.18
Neither bereavement nor regret is seen here. The dead man is going to be gloriously united with Yama and the Fathers. The deadman is going to the resting place prepared for him by Yama the forerunner of men, who has gone before us to prepare a place for us and to show us the way; he has endured the entire burden of the human condition and he has overcome the ordeal of the great departure.

In a spiritual sense, our life which ends in death is a pilgrimage toward unity; toward oneness; this is the mortal path of man. The phrase sīkhi-bhavatī is seen in the text considered here. When this ātman becomes weak and unconscious, then all the life-powers collect around him. Then he gathers to himself all the particles of light and descends into the heart . . . etc. "He is becoming one", they say, "he does not see" etc. "when the breath of life departs, all other breaths follow. He then is reunited with consciousness and departs together with consciousness. His knowledge and his works and his past experience (alone) accompany him.

The ceremony of the purificatory rites is indicative of his journey to light and immortality. The singing priest sings the chant then the sacrificer recites, "from unreality lead me to reality; from darkness lead me to light from death lead me to immortality. "Here the unreality is death, and reality is immortality. In this sense, the prayer is "from death lead me to immortality, make me immortal. In the next prayer, darkness means death of course, and light means immortality, that is, from death lead me to immortality, make me immortal. This is what he means.

119 BU 4.4.1-2
120 BU 1.3.28
Agni also is a leader of sacrifice. Life is a journey to the home of the Truth, to the world of the sun, it is a battle with the established powers of Darkness that oppose the advance of the Aryan. Aurobindo has put in this way.

The life of man is represented as a sacrifice to the gods, a journey sometimes figured as a crossing of dangerous waters, sometimes as an ascent from level to level of the hill of being, and thirdly, as a battle against hostile nations. But these three images are not kept separate. The sacrifice is also a journey; indeed the sacrifice itself is described as travelling, as journeying to a divine goal, and the journey and the sacrifice are continually spoken as a battle against the dark powers. 121

Vedic Universalism

A remarkable aspect of Vedic exhortation is its universalism. The Vedas speak for humanity at large. The deity Indra is common to all. "We invoke for our succurr Indra who is the common friend of all." 122 Again, the Yajurveda proclaims that it speaks for all mankind:

So may I speak these blessed words to the people at large, to the Brahmana and the Ksatriya, to the Sudra, and the Vaisya; to my own people and to the foreigner. 123

This civic sense - enlightened civic sense -is the direct consequence of the everwidening outlook and the depth of understanding characteristic of great souls. Here is an excellent example; a prayer for fellowship with all living beings.

May all beings look on me with the eye of a friend;
May I look on all beings with the eye of a friend;
May we look on one another with the eye of a friend. 124

121 Aurobindo, Key to Vedic Symbolism
122 RV 8.99.8. Samānam Indram Avase Havāmahe
123 YV 26.2
124 YV 36.2
How is this universal outlook possible for men of such remote antiquity? We may wonder! Even in this age of civilization and technological advancement we have not learned sincerely "to look on living beings with the eye of a friend!" But they tell us the secret of their love: It is born of the sage's final realisation of the unity of all existence. The Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā puts down the vision in the following manner.

The loving sage beholds that mysterious existence wherein the universe comes to have one home;
Therein unites and there from emanates all.
The Lord is the warp and woof in the created beings.\(^{125}\)

The mystic conception 'hidden in the cave' 'guhānihitam' of the Ultimate Essence and Unity of things is the inspiring life force of the Vedic View of Life.

**Conclusion**

It is said that the tree is known by its fruits. The merit of the Vedic vision of life can be assessed by its acceptance and adoration by the later generation of the Indian people. It has been assumed that the Vedic Age of the Āryans had reached the stage of excellence of civilization. In knowledge, power and social organization, they had attained a high stage. The Vedic Age has been

\(^{125}\) IV (V.8) 32.6

Venaṣ tat paśyan nihitam guhāsad
yatre viśvā. bhavatyeka nīdam
tasminnīdam saha vi caitī sryam
sa otah prtaśca vibhūh prajāsu.

(Here the Essence is first referred to in the neuter gender as tat and set (that existence), later in the masculine vibhūh. In its essence it is beyond gender. In its creative aspect it is attributed with gender).
recognised as the age of excellence in all walks of life, and in all subsequent ages attempts have been made to approximate the life of a man to the conditions of the Vedic Age. In the periods that followed all those things that were valuable in man's life—philosophy, religion, science and even codes of conduct were traced back to the Vedas. In fact, the Vedas have left abiding monuments in all departments of life. All the later intellectual activities of Indian thinkers, to a great extent, have been attempts to present some aspect or the other of the Vedic thought. All that Brāhmaṇism afterwards claimed to be was the inheritance of the Vedic traditions. The entire mythology of the later period is based on that of the Vedic period. All the stories narrated in the later purāṇas about Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Indra have them their root in the Vedic mythology. The main philosophical doctrines are based on Vedic conceptions. All the philosophical systems in Hinduism are representations of the Vedic conception of the nature, goal of man, and his relation to the universe. In fact the philosophy of the Vedas was very synthetical and all-embracing. Even ordinary sciences like astronomy and medicine were associated with the Vedas. The entire Sanskrit literature of the later ages records the attempts of ancient Indians to understand the Vedic civilization, to revive the Vedic culture and to approximate their lives to the ideals of the Vedic civilization.

The organisation of Hinduism is one of the principal achievements of the later Vedic period. Hinduism is a systematized body of dogmas and doctrines expounded in the later Vedic literature—the Brāhmaṇas, the Upanisads and the Āryan Āyānakas. The doctrines about the soul (Ātman) the Absolute (Brahman) relation between man
and god, and the principles of karma, māyā, mukti, transmigration of soul and other social features, that have dominated Hindu thought and moulded the life of every Hindu, were evolved, stated and elaborated in the Upanisads. It was not only the doctrinal basis of Hinduism that was established in the later Vedic times but the social basis of Hindu life was also firmly and solidly laid. The Grhya sūtras prescribed in the minutest details the duties of man from birth to cremation laying down the ceremonies for each occasion, ceremonies at birth, naming, initiation, education, marriage etc. This created domestic rituals, had formulated the discipline of the household and, thus, transformed the people of India into one single Hindu Community. In fact "it is this body of domestic rituals that makes a Hindu". If the Grhya sūtras created the Hindu Community, the Dharma Sūtra organised the Hindu Society on a conscious foundation by laying down social customs, usages, codes and laws.

In addition to the Grhya Sūtra and the Dharma Sūtra equally important is the social doctrine of varnārāma Dharma and caatur-varṇya system. It was also an attempt related to the conscious organisation of the Hindu Society and maintenance of the supremacy of the priestly class (In the historical evolution of India, caste system as an institution of social order did triumph, but at the expense of national unity and solidarity.

Lofty sense of spirituality

The Vedic conception of spirituality has been positive. The Vedas made original contributions in the field of religious beliefs. They perceived God in all, animate and inanimate. They emphasised
that Brahman or God is the essence of the Universe. He has materi- 
ialized in all existing things. He is the source and refuge of 
all lives. He is sat (Truth). Rta (order) and Ananda. Besides 
the conception of omnipresent God, the Vedic Rais initiated the 
theories of evolution, the doctrines of immortality of soul, kama; 
reincarnation, avatars, bhakti, ritual, renunciation, pilgrimage, 
etc. The validity of these beliefs is proved by their continued 
vitality, because countless generations in India have consciously 
sought to model their lives in the light of these doctrines. They 
have entered the warp and woof of Indian life to which they have 
given a meaning and purpose.